

International Strategy Update

Third Quarter, 2019

international market review

The MSCI EAFE Index (“the Index”) declined -1.1% during the third quarter. In local currency terms, the Index gained +1.8%, as a strengthening Dollar subtracted -2.9% from returns. Weaker European economic indicators and easing monetary policy pressured the Euro (-4.3%) and the UK Pound (-3.2%). The Yen was relatively stable (-0.3%) as it tends to move inversely with global growth expectations, in a similar fashion to the US Dollar.

Eurozone manufacturing activity fell to a seven-year low, dragged down by depressed German industrial production. The European Central Bank (ECB) cut the deposit interest rate by 0.1% to -0.5% and announced it will resume quantitative easing. Italy formed a new government, ousting the far-right Lega party. The UK Supreme Court thwarted Prime Minister Johnson’s efforts to move the UK closer to a no-deal Brexit. The US and Japan agreed to the first stages of a trade agreement, but President Trump announced additional tariffs on Chinese goods and China retaliated.

The defensive Healthcare (+2.4%), Utilities (+2.4%), and Consumer Staples (+1.9%) sectors outperformed as risk appetite and interest rates declined. Energy (-6.5%) was the worst-performing sector as oil prices declined, despite an attack on a Saudi processing facility. Concerns about the business cycle caused the Materials (-5.4%) and Industrials (-2.0%) sectors to underperform.

The narrow Belgium (+3.4%) market was the best-performing country in the Index. Japan (+3.1%) also outperformed, bolstered in part by a recovery in autos. Hong Kong (-11.9%) was impacted by civil unrest. Singapore (-5.8%) was weighed down by the Sino-US trade dispute, while Germany (-4.0%) underperformed as its economic indicators deteriorated.

portfolio review

A composite of Boston Common’s International portfolios declined -1.4% before fees, slightly behind the Index. Stock selection in the Technology sector was the top contributor to relative returns. Japanese electronic component supplier TDK benefited from solid demand for its smartphone batteries. The outlook for the semiconductor industry stabilized, and Taiwan Semiconductor and lithography manufacturer ASML were leading contributors. The Materials sector was another positive contributor, as our specialty chemical holdings outperformed the metal and mining companies in the Index.

performance



	QTD	YTD	1Yr	3Yr	5Yr	7Yr	10Yr	Since Inception*
Gross	-1.3%	12.9%	-1.9%	6.9%	4.2%	6.2%	5.5%	6.0%
Net	-1.5%	12.4%	-2.6%	6.2%	3.6%	5.5%	4.8%	5.3%
MSCI EAFE	-1.1%	12.8%	-1.3%	6.5%	3.3%	6.1%	4.9%	4.4%

contributors & detractors

top 10	% of capital	return	relative contrib.	sector
SUNDRUG CO LTD	1.5%	17.4%	0.25%	Consumer Staples
UMICORE	1.3%	18.9%	0.25%	Materials
TDK CORP	1.5%	16.7%	0.25%	Technology
TAIWAN SEMICONDUCTOR MFG	1.1%	19.4%	0.20%	Technology
ASML HOLDING	1.0%	18.5%	0.18%	Technology
HOYA CORP	2.1%	7.0%	0.17%	Healthcare
ORSTED A/S	1.8%	7.2%	0.17%	Utilities
FERGUSON	2.9%	2.8%	0.14%	Industrials
VONOVIA SE	2.0%	6.1%	0.14%	Real Estate
ROCHE HLDGS	3.0%	3.9%	0.13%	Healthcare
			1.88%	

bottom 10

SAP SE	1.9%	-14.5%	-0.28%	Technology
SAMPO	1.9%	-15.0%	-0.28%	Financials
KION GROUP	1.2%	-16.7%	-0.24%	Industrials
AIA GROUP LTD	1.9%	-12.1%	-0.23%	Financials
MELIA HOTELS INTL	1.1%	-17.4%	-0.20%	Consumer Discretionary
SPIRAX-SARCO ENG	1.0%	-17.3%	-0.19%	Industrials
ING GROEP N.V.	2.7%	-7.9%	-0.18%	Financials
SINGAPORE TELECOMM	1.6%	-10.6%	-0.16%	Communication Services
COVESTRO	0.4%	-15.3%	-0.13%	Materials
NOVARTIS	2.7%	-4.6%	-0.10%	Healthcare
			-1.98%	

Specifically, Belgian metal recycler and cathode producer Umicore rallied on news of a large order from an important customer. Our underweight of the Energy sector also helped relative performance. From a regional perspective, our stock selection in Japan helped returns, led by lens manufacturer Hoya and convenience store operator Sundrug. Additional key contributors included Danish wind farm developer Orsted, British plumbing distributor Ferguson, and German residential real estate company Vonovia.

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Stock selection in the Financial Services sector was the largest detractor from performance. European insurance and bank holdings Sampo and ING were pressured by negative interest rates. The instability in Hong Kong weighed on Asian life insurance provider AIA. Consumer Discretionary was also a significant drag on results. Spanish hotel chain Melia suffered from adverse trends in its Caribbean properties. South African internet holding company Naspers declined after it spun out a new company, Prosus. Developed Europe ex. UK was the top regional detractor, weighed down in particular by German holdings: software provider SAP, warehouse equipment supplier Kion, and chemical company Covestro. Other key detractors included British steam specialist Spirax-Sarco, Singaporean telecom provider SingTel, and Swiss Pharma giant Novartis.

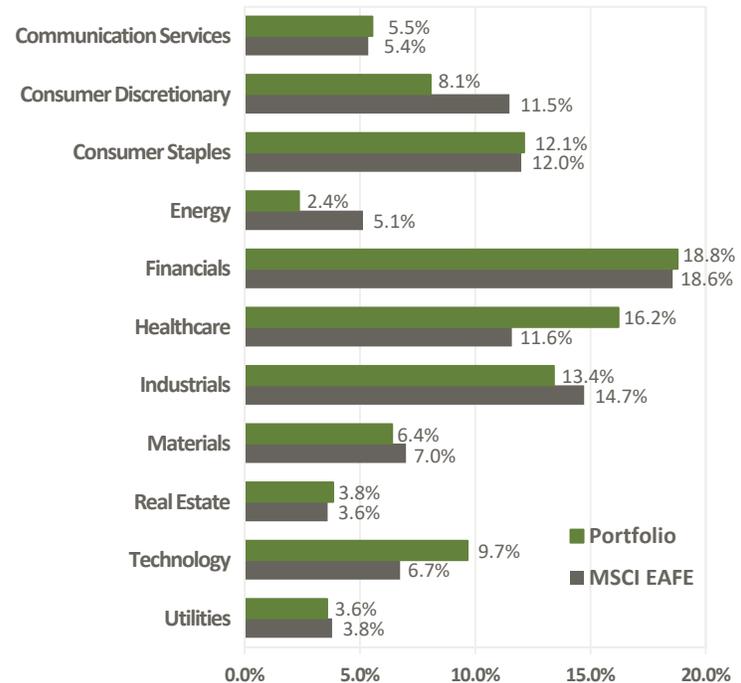
portfolio activity

Among our transactions this quarter, we purchased Swedish personal care company Essity. The company has a strong presence in profitable and high-growth segments including professional hygiene and Emerging Markets. The company is also making good progress towards its ambitious ESG targets: 59% of its new products yielded social and/or environmental improvements, and the company reduced carbon emissions and water usage by 5% and 3%, respectively. Essity is working to improve margins, and we find the stock's valuation compelling at 11x EBITDA with a 2.0% dividend yield. We also purchased Kerry Group, a leading supplier of products that improve the taste and nutritional value of packaged food and beverages while also enabling clean label solutions with natural ingredients. The Irish company leverages its technical expertise and demand for healthier eating trends into consistent high-single-digit earnings growth that warrants a premium valuation. Lastly, we bought Japanese human resource specialist Recruit Holdings. Japan's historically tight labor market (2.5% unemployment rate and a 1.6x jobs-to-applicants ratio) should lead to high demand for the company's staffing business and its women's empowerment initiatives. Recruit also owns fast-growing valuable internet properties, including the world's leading job search platform, Indeed. During the quarter we sold Covestro, a German chemical company. We view many of the company's products as environmental solutions, for example durable yet light-weight plastics that help improve automotive efficiency. The plastics industry at large, however, faces increasing supply and a questionable demand outlook, partially related to new regulations. Given the protracted uncertainty of the competitive environment, we elected to sell the position. In addition, we received cash for our holding in the Dutch organic food company Wessanen, which was acquired by a private equity consortium.

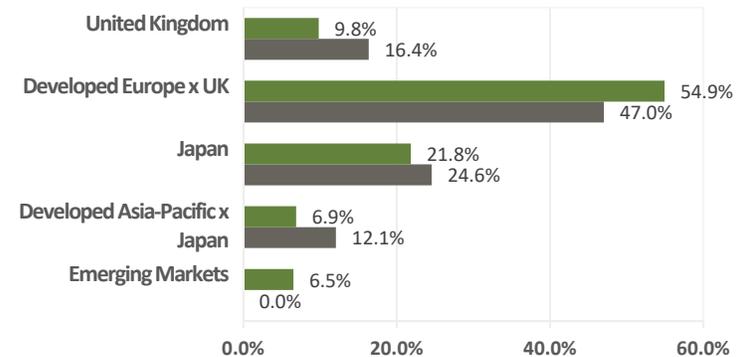
economic & market outlook

Global industrial demand appears to be deteriorating, but policymakers are responding with pro-growth actions. The US-led trade war is the primary suspect responsible for sharp declines in manufacturing activity. While political expediency may make a partial deal between the US and China more likely in the near term, broader structural disagreements will remain.

sector allocation



regional allocation



portfolio characteristics

	boston common	msci eafe
# holdings	61	923
Valuation		
Next 12m Price to Earnings	15.2	13.9
Price to Book Value	2.2	1.6
Price to Sales	1.8	1.2
Dividend Yield	2.8%	3.2%
Growth		
3yr Sales Consensus Growth	3.4%	2.3%
3yr EPS Consensus Growth	4.3%	4.3%
Risk		
Wtd Avg Mkt Cap	63,164	65,300
LT Debt/Cap	30.5%	33.0%
Beta*	1.01	1.00

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Central banks have already started to ease monetary conditions, and new fiscal stimulus should be forthcoming, particularly from Germany. We are mindful of geopolitical hot spots including the Middle East and Brexit, but international equity valuations look attractive, especially relative to the US. Our portfolios are built with bottom-up analysis and are focused on sustainable growth drivers; common themes include energy efficiency, healthy consumption, sustainable transportation, and technology leadership. In aggregate, our portfolios are overweight defensive sectors, especially medical equipment, and notably underweight consumer discretionary and commodities.

Europe

The German economy is likely in a recession, given its probable contraction in the third quarter. A deceleration of global trade volume is weighing on the world's third-largest exporter. However, a dramatic decline in auto production related to changing emissions standards may be an even larger factor for the economy's malaise. The German government has had a fiscal surplus in each of the last four years and is now poised to inject stimulus. We are encouraged by its new plans to invest in electric car infrastructure, wind power, and cleaner heating systems to get the country back on track to reach its 2030 carbon emissions reduction targets. France and the Netherlands, where economic growth has been more stable, have also recently announced fiscal stimulus plans. Fiscal support is important because the ECB's policies, including more negative interest rates and bond purchases, are likely yielding diminishing returns.

Political uncertainty has been a headwind for European investors, but stabilization in Italy is an important positive development. The Brexit saga has become more raucous, and the UK's service sector is deteriorating faster than those of all other major European economies. Although we expect a general election will be held prior to any permanent decision, we remain underweight the UK market based on the disruptive effects of Brexit. We are overweight the rest of Europe, where we find many ESG leaders with attractive valuations relative to fundamentals.

Japan

Japan has implemented aggressive policies to offset deflationary headwinds, yet it has also occasionally looked to shore up its fiscal imbalances; its debt has soared to 238% of GDP, and its aging population will increasingly strain its public resources. In a nod to these challenges, Japan hiked its consumption tax from 8% to 10% on October 1st. To ease the burden on consumers, the government devised a scheme including rebates for electronic payments and a list of exempted products. The net effects may still be negative, but Japan will likely avoid a repeat of the recession that followed the larger sales tax increase in 2014.

new & closed positions

closed	sector	% of port.
COVESTRO AG	Materials	0.8%
NORDEA BANK AB	Financials	0.0%
PROSUS N.V.	Consumer Discretionary	0.4%
WESSANEN NV KONINKLIJKE	Consumer Staples	0.8%
total closed		2.1%
new	sector	% of port.
ESSITY AB	Consumer Staples	1.4%
KERRY GROUP	Consumer Staples	0.8%
NORDEA BANK AB	Financials	0.0%
PROSUS N.V.	Consumer Discretionary	0.5%
RECRUIT HLDGS CO L	Industrials	1.2%
total new		4.0%

company spotlight: shiseido

Company Profile

Shiseido is Japan's largest cosmetics company and is ranked fifth globally. With a history dating back to 1872, the company now operates in nearly 120 countries and offers a wide portfolio of brands in prestige skincare, fragrance, color cosmetics, professional, and personal care products. With refillable models for over 700 products in Japan, Shiseido is enabling the transition to a circular economy. The company also certifies its manufacturing sites to industry-best ISO 14001 environmental standards and responds annually to the CDP (formerly known as the Carbon Disclosure Project).

ESG Integrated Investment Thesis

Over the past five years, Shiseido has significantly restructured its business to regain its brand power as a global leader in cosmetics. The company has not only reversed declines, but actually gained market share through renewed strategic investment and distribution network optimization. With a strong culture of product innovation, industry-leading R&D capabilities, and a diversified brand portfolio, we believe Shiseido will continue to benefit from the faster growing prestige beauty industry. Management has made important sustainability improvements: product lifecycle assessments are helping reduce carbon emissions at each step of the value chain, and governance reform has led to much greater board diversity, with women now accounting for 45% of board seats. We expect Shiseido will continue to close its margin gap with its global peers thanks to operating leverage from strong topline growth as well as renewed focus on expense controls, leading to consistent, double-digit earnings growth. *Risks: deteriorating consumer confidence, delay in operating improvements*

ESG Engagement Opportunities

The company's revenues are derived from products that contain significant amounts of palm oil. While Shiseido is a member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, it does not certify its palm oil sources to the most stringent standards and has not yet committed to a policy of zero deforestation, regarded as best practice within the cosmetics industry. We see an important opportunity for the company to improve its image as a sustainable leader while also protecting its supply chain from operational risk.

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Decelerating global trade poses an external challenge for Japan. Many Japanese corporations are facing profit headwinds from the US-China trade war. Japan did sign a trade deal with the US, but that merely averted further damage. Importantly, corporate governance in Japan is improving. Increased female labor participation, higher capital returns to shareholders, and inexpensive valuations are appealing characteristics of the Japanese market. Japan is our single largest country exposure, even though we still hold less than the Index.

Asia Pacific and Emerging Markets

While the effectiveness of monetary policy in Europe and Japan may be waning, Asia-Pacific and Emerging Markets have more room to maneuver. Real interest rates are positive in most major Emerging Markets, and inflation is relatively low, setting the stage for more expansionary policies. Central banks in China, India, and Australia have recently moved to ease credit conditions and lower borrowing costs. Since the group is sensitive to trade woes, domestic policy support is important to promote growth, especially in China.

Shareholder Engagement Highlights

Milestones

Lobbying Disclosure: We have withdrawn our [lobbying disclosure resolution](#) with **Oracle** given their substantive implementation of the resolution ask! This was our third resolution with Oracle requesting greater disclosure of direct and indirect lobbying expenses, calling for transparency and accountability in the spending of shareholder resources.

Private Prison Labor: In a win for investors, activists, and the immigrant community, which have collectively put pressure on banks to stop financing the private prison industry, [nine major banks have publicly committed to cut lending activity to private prisons!](#)

Indigenous Peoples' Rights: Boston Common is [leading a coalition](#) of investors representing \$2.9 trillion, calling for the **Equator Principles** to be strengthened to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. 13 of the 17 banks that financed the Dakota Access Pipeline project were signatories to the Equator Principles.

Advancing Sustainability in Japan: Boston Common met with **Hoya, Kao, Orix, NTT, NTT DoCoMo, Panasonic, and Shiseido** on [improving ESG performance](#). Recently, our engagements have shifted from developing ESG awareness and policies to establishing ESG metrics and assessing the impact of companies' policies on people and planet.

Work in Progress

Methane: Led by ICCR, Boston Common asked 7 oil and gas companies to support stricter regulation on methane emissions – supported by 130 investors representing \$5.5 AUM. **Equinor** publically issued positive support for this.

Global Health: Along with ICCR, Boston Common expanded engagement with 11 food and beverage companies, including **Mondelez, PepsiCo, and Unilever** to promote positive public policy on health and wellness through lobbying activities. The three companies have provided robust examples of how they are engaging globally.

Racial Equity & Gender Equality: Founder & President Geeta Aiyer moderated a Confluence Philanthropy webinar, ["It's About Time: A Call to Advance Racial Equity in the Investment Industry"](#) based on their recent report.

Industry Leadership

Climate Week in NYC: Geeta Aiyer, Steven Heim, and Lauren Compere represented [Boston Common at Climate Week](#) and attended various investor and multi-stakeholder events throughout the week.

**The Beta calculation is based on the trailing five-year performance of a representative account within a portfolio's strategy. Source: Bloomberg & Factset. Past performance does not guarantee future results. All investments involve risk, including the risk of losing principal. The information in this document should not be considered a recommendation to buy or sell any security. There is no assurance that any securities we discuss will remain in a strategy at the time you receive this document. The securities discussed do not represent a strategy's entire portfolio and may represent only a small portion of a strategy's holdings. It should not be assumed that any securities transactions we discuss were or will prove to be profitable. A different company is selected each quarter to be featured in our Company Spotlight. The company is chosen based on any potential updates to our investment thesis and/or ESG case. Composite returns are presented in U.S. dollars, net of transaction costs, management fees and withholding taxes, with interest and dividends accrued. Returns for periods greater than one year are annualized. This product invests in foreign securities, which are subject to special currency, political and economic risks. The MSCI (Net) EAFE Index is a free-float adjusted market capitalization index that is designed to measure developed market equity performance in developed markets as determined by MSCI, excluding the U.S. and Canada. The Index's performance results are presented net of estimated foreign withholding taxes on dividends, interest and capital gains. The index is unmanaged and does not incur management fees, transaction costs, or other expenses associated with separately managed accounts. The composition of our composite is different from the composition of indices because of differences in sector and industry exposure, risk, volatility and holdings. Boston Common claims compliance with Global Investment Performance Standards (GIPS®). For a full listing of Boston Common's composites and to request a GIPS® Compliant presentation, please call the Compliance department at 617-720-5557.*